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CURRENT OPINION

Religious Changes among German Workers

The spiritual transformation which has accompanied modern industrialism in Germany is well described in the *Constructive Quarterly* by Walter Classen, who is widely known for his work on behalf of education among juvenile laborers in German cities. He points out that when a great part of the population changed their abode from country to city, all the old convictions of the household—its religion and its morality—remained behind or perished. In the period from 1870 to 1890, men lost contact with the old, ecclesiastical, patriarchal point of view. In German industrial districts the workers joined the Social Democratic party in overwhelming numbers.

The generation active between 1870 and 1890, however, has come to an end. We now have to do with a new generation, belonging to the last twenty or twenty-five years. The great mass of the population is now spiritually impoverished. The inheritance of Christian family discipline is exhausted. The present generation cannot live on the inheritance of the fathers, but must create a new one.

As to the remedies, the author suggests that Germany can escape industrial misery only through organization, based on Christian principles, through recognition of social guilt, and through the courage to make sacrifices for the lowly; in other words, by following Jesus. Pioneers must, by living out their ideas, make themselves fellow-citizens of the workers. To serve the people is the highest Christian social ideal.

Protestantism in Germany

The serious crisis of the German church is described by A. D. McLaren, of Berlin, who writes in the July *Hibbert Journal*. The nominally Protestant population of Berlin,

he reports, is 2,060,000. Last February, on a Sunday, when many confirmations were to take place, and when a maximum showing might be expected, there was a total attendance at the various Protestant churches of 35,000. Since the first of January, 1908, in Berlin alone there has been a formal and legal secession of 31,367 Protestants, 5,029 Catholics, and 196 Jews.

The attitude of the state authorities toward the secession from the church has been very undignified. They have prohibited anti-church meetings, and have tried to retain in the church, by compulsion, those who have ceased to subscribe to its doctrines. This helps to prove the oft-repeated assertion that the authorities, unable to maintain real unity in the religious life of the people, are striving to shore up a tottering edifice.

Protestant Christianity in Germany today presents us with a complex of spiritual forces which came into relief in the recent heresy trials of Pastor Jatho and other Lutheran ministers. Jatho's twenty years' care of his flock, in the city of Cologne, was known as few other men's work in the Protestant church. But his retention in view of doctrinal unsoundness was declared to be impossible by the "High Church Council," the supreme ecclesiastical authority in Prussia. Meetings of protest were held in various cities, and in Hesse alone eighty-one Protestant pastors expressed regret at Jatho's expulsion.

What does the Prussian state church represent? It stands for the upper class; not what in England is called "society," but the officials who rule the country on behalf of the aristocracy. It is the political-religious side of "Prussiandom."

The indifference of the mass of the people toward this church is crystallizing more and more into a living hostility. The working class is becoming increasingly convinced that

Christianity has been misused to bolster up the Prussian state-idea. The mass of the people are growing more and more conscious of a gap between the view of the universe taught by science and the dogmatic view of the universe inculcated by the church. The conviction that those who have inwardly broken with the church are morally bound to declare their secession is strengthening among all classes.

The Anglican Crisis

That the now famous "Kikuyu incident" may bring disestablishment of the Church of England nearer is the opinion of Professor Frederick Palmer, as expressed in the *Harvard Theological Review*. The English church, as he says, is so entangled with a special class of society that it has not the chance to have its excellences known to others or its faults to itself. In order to come to its true self it needs to stand on its own feet. The probability is that the African incident will, for a time, increase the animosities between the different groups in the Anglican establishment, and that the Low and Broad parties will unite against the High Church party. But it may be doubted whether the Church of England will actually be disrupted. It is possible that the Anglican communion will take a leaf from the experience of Rome, which has always at first opposed innovations, but when she has found that she could not fight them has adopted them. So the English church may allow a freer sacrament, as in the Kikuyu case.

At the present day, Christians of all names have been brought together in common work and worship through many interdenominational movements. This drawing together means that all are feeling the presence of one and the same spirit. And since spirit shapes body to its own ends, we may perhaps look forward to the establishment of some form of organic unity. But unity will not come by ecclesiastical conventions imposing ways upon the indwelling spirit, but

by the spirit dictating ways to the conventions. The incident in Africa was a result of greater apprehension of the spirit of Christ, and it will do much to extend the understanding of that spirit.

A New Form of Christianity Needed

That Christianity in its traditional, orthodox form is inadequate to the demands of the present age, and that only a new Christianity is fit to be the religion of the world is the contention of Professor D. C. Macintosh, of Yale University, in the July *American Journal of Theology*. The old Christianity, borne down by its traditional impedimenta, no longer has even a fighting chance.

Intelligent and well-educated non-Christians object to the Christian religion as it has been presented to them by orthodox missionaries chiefly on the ground of its supernaturalism, as expressed in the older view of miracles, the atonement, the person of Christ, and the Trinity. This protest is not due to perversity of heart; it is intellectually honest, and it is not unreasonable. Christianity must reverse its attitude toward the supernatural or else resign itself to continuing as the religion of the unscientific and superstitious, with the prospect of finally disappearing when all classes and nations have come under the influence of scientific modes of thought.

Our present-day problem is to find the equivalent, in our own situation, to the vital, rationalized Christianity which triumphed over all competitors in the early centuries of our era. The religion which is to convert the world today must be a new and universal Christianity, rational to the critical thought of a scientific age. Those who cannot see the essential good in Christianity are to be blamed for their lack of discrimination. If they are scientific and rational enough to be able to detect intellectual defects in the older Christianity, they ought also to be discerning enough to appreciate its essential soundness and inherent strength.

The Earliest Story of the Fall

In the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* for June, 1914, Dr. S. Langdon writes "A Preliminary Account of a Sumerian Legend of the Flood and the Fall of Man," with a note by Dr. A. H. Sayce. The great Babylonian epic of Gilgames was known to be a Semitic version of a Southern Sumerian story. A tablet found by Dr. Langdon in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania gives us a portion of a Northern Sumerian epic. The name of the Sumerian prototype of Noah is given as Tagtug, which is a reduplicate form of the Sumerian root *tag* meaning "to repose" (a root having a similar meaning is found in the Semitic word Noah). Another part of the story relates how someone (is it the same Tagtug?) took and ate of a certain forbidden plant and was cursed with the curse of mortality. This plant is identified by Dr. Langdon with the cassia, which was among the Sumerians the medicinal herb *par excellence*.

The Doctrine of the Virgin-Birth

In the *Revue biblique* for January and April, 1914, Father Lagrange studies "La conception surnaturelle du Christ d'après Saint Luc" ("The Supernatural Conception of Christ According to St. Luke"). Scholars have shown how the belief in the marvelous birth of heroes and demi-gods was common in antiquity; they have often argued that Greek and Roman converts to apostolic Christianity, after their conversion, kept on thinking very much on the same lines as before, so that, when they heard of Jesus and his miracles, they looked upon him as a kind of demi-god; in order to reconcile this notion with monotheism they explained the birth of Christ as similar to that of other demi-gods in traditional lore. Father Lagrange shows how difficult it is to maintain this theory. There was in contemporary paganism a current of new ideas on the nature of the gods. For centuries phi-

losophers had combated the coarser notions of religion, sometimes explaining the gods away. A Gentile who joined the church did so because he could no longer accept the tenets of polytheism. Is it likely that he would become a Christian and carry over into his new faith a whole system of belief which the heathens themselves discarded more and more? We know, moreover, that converts were carefully catechized and that the primitive church was largely made up of Jews and proselytes converted to Christianity. Such would not have easily accepted a dogma at the hands of pagan converts. As a matter of fact we find in the Old Testament stories of miraculous births, for instance those of Isaac, Samson, and Samuel. There was a common notion that the mother of Moses was a virgin. The Septuagint used the word "virgin" in the translation of Isa. 7:14. It has been said against this view that the doctrine of the virgin-birth was elaborated in the first stages of the history of the church; that the word "spirit," being a feminine noun in Hebrew, the Jews would not have thought of the Spirit of God as fulfilling the action of a male agent. Father Lagrange answers that the word "woman" is neuter in German and that does not prevent the German from accepting the idea that a woman can be a mother. It seems, therefore, more scientific to admit that the notion of the virgin-birth was not brought in by pagan converts to Christianity but is the outcome of messianic hope. The story as given by Luke is taken from Palestinian sources, without influence of Greek notions.

The Earliest Mention of the Cock in the Bible

In the *Journal of Biblical Literature* for June, 1914, Dr. J. H. Peters writes on "The Cock in the Old Testament." The text of Prov. 30:29-31 is corrupt, but it is probable that in vs. 31 the word *zarzier*, translated "greyhound," means really a "cock." This

is the rendering given by the Septuagint, the Peshitto Syriac, and the Targum. This passage dates from the third century B.C.

The Precious Metals in Babylonia

In the *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* for June, 1914, Dr. A. Poebel writes on "Gold und Silber in altbabylonischer Zeit" ("Gold and Silver in Babylonian Antiquity"). Dr. Poebel publishes the text of two Sumerian tablets where 15 shekels of silver are given as the equivalent of one shekel of gold. Two other tablets (formerly published by Genouillac and Thureau-Dangin) respectively give the value of gold as being eight times and three times that of silver. It is probable that the proportion 15:1 is that of silver to pure gold while the lower values belonged properly to alloys of gold and other metals. It is certain, however, that in Egypt, at least in early times, the relative value of gold was not so high.

Paul and Hellenism

In the *American Journal of Theology* for October, Professor Rudolph Knopf, of the University of Bonn, Germany, in discussing "Paul and Hellenism," gives a good summary of the more recent discussions of the subject. He apparently is not well acquainted with the English literature on the subject, but since so much of the recent investigation has been conducted by Germans, his summary is particularly good.

The variety of excellent and devoted work which has been done by theologians and philologists shows us the way by which we can come nearer to an understanding and a correct estimate of Paul. We see him and his Christianity surrounded by a world which was exceptionally rich in religious thinking. We see the feelings and ideas of this environment passing over into early Christianity. There is little danger that the greatness and distinctiveness of Paul can be lessened by this inquiry. Paul is to be judged, not by what he had in common with his environment, but by what was distinctive to him. He who knows how to read and understand will ever be charmed anew by the power

of personally experienced religion in the very refined, spiritual, and imperishable form in which it meets us in the Pauline letters. That which constitutes the greatness and value of the Gospels—inwardness, belief in the Father, the worth of man's soul, love, and the close union of religion with ethics—all this is vitally experienced by Paul and is freshly and insistently expounded. This type of religion was never supplanted by the religion of "physical" mysticism and sacramentalism. On turning from a study of the Hellenistic mystery-religions we are always newly impressed by the greatness and inwardness of Pauline religion. It is the business of correct *religionsgeschichtliche* research never to obliterate this distinction. A religion is never to be judged by the survivals which adhere to it from an earlier stage of development, but by the noblest features which appear in its evolution.

Should a Christology Include Other than Historical Elements?

Professor Gerald Birney Smith, of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, also contributes to the October number of the *American Journal of Theology* an interpretation of the present tendencies to develop a new Christology. He thus summarizes his conclusion:

A survey of the problem of the relation of the Christ of faith to the historical Jesus suggests that we are now beginning to pass through a reconstruction of our Christology which will bring it into harmony with some of the other reconstructions in theology which have been made. The analogy between the problem which we have been discussing and the problem of the nature of the Bible is suggestive. The older theologians attempted to find explicitly in the Bible the entire content of Christian faith, and indeed, to find it expressed in eternal form. But as critical examination of both the Bible and the nature of faith progressed, it became evident that as a matter of fact other factors besides the Bible inevitably enter into religious thinking and condition the results. When once this is recognized, it is possible to cease attempting to make the Bible teach everything which the modern theologian wishes to affirm.

Men can let the Bible speak for itself and utter its message honestly. The result has been that we are now in a position to ascertain truthfully exactly what the Bible contains, and to use it honestly. It cannot be said that the practice of forced exegesis has entirely disappeared; but we are more and more abandoning the method of the scribes. With the abandonment of this method comes the possibility of a more accurate understanding of the actual historical evolution of our religious faith. Thus we are seeing a rewriting of our theology and a revision of our methods of religious education.

The present trend in christological discussion is in the direction of a similar honesty of attitude with reference to Jesus. Just as there has been much forced exegesis of the Bible, so there has been much forced interpretation of the significance of Jesus. At present, it is generally true that only those types of theology which hold to the exclusive conception of revelation are retaining unchanged the traditional doctrine of Christ. As we have seen, it is characteristic of Protestantism generally to attempt to formulate the doctrine of Christ in such a way as to make room for both the demands of a distinctly modern religious consciousness and the possible fluctua-

tions in opinion concerning historical facts. As over against the traditional position, this seems like a "reduced" Christology, to use Dr. Sanday's expressive term. And, if we must continue to find in the *verifiable* traits of the historical Jesus *all* that faith needs to affirm, faith will inevitably be made poorer by the more cautious and critical attitude of modern scholarship. If, however, just as we have done in the case of the Bible, we recognize the wider sources of our religious history and the broader scope of a providential historical development, we may still continue positively to affirm all that a vital religious faith requires without feeling compelled to validate the entire content by explicit reference to the person of Christ. If once this broader conception of the nature of Christianity shall come to prevail, we shall be in a position to find out honestly the real significance of Jesus for our faith and to construct a doctrinal statement compatible with historical accuracy. But to attempt to locate in the person of Jesus everything which modern faith affirms leads to serious confusion as soon as it is clearly seen that there is any considerable difference between the demands of living faith and the ascertainable facts concerning the historical Jesus.